

Son of Katching Up - Issue 25

There has been so much stuff to cover in this issue that I've had to resort to this loose-leaf sheet in order to review a swathe of books that I'd recommend you read [ED. NOTE. *particularly during those periods when you're waiting for the next Kronikle to tumble thro' your letterbox*]. Plus, there's one more review of a recording. And finally, some desperately sad news.

First up is Rod Kennedy's book "**Music From the Heart.**" The founder of the Kerrville Folk Festival chose to subtitle this biography "*The fifty-year chronicle of his life in music (with a few sidetrips).*" Available in hardback and softback formats, and edited by musicologist Hugh C. Sparks, this coffee table sized book is over 400 pages in length and includes, at the rear, an extremely useful and comprehensive A-Z index of the contents. There are also Appendices that feature all the Festival Main Stage performers [1972 to 1996] and the Kerrville Music Award winners [1993 to 1996]. Crammed between the covers is literally a *legion of photographs*, all the way from Page 1, to the Epilogue on page 379. They not only enhance Kennedy's narrative, they bring this musical history [plus the sidetrips] to life. Rod Kennedy was born in Buffalo, New York in 1930, and the opening chapter covers the period 1935 – 1950. Kennedy spent his early years in a seemingly endless stream of schools [fee paying as well as state], as his mother's day job took them to Wheeling [West Virginia], New Orleans and finally Houston. Attracted to music from an early age, during his teen years Kennedy, also an active sportsman, sang in choirs, glee clubs and took part in school productions. Whither this interest in music? – well, Rod's father was an active barbershop quartet singer. When his mother's day job in Houston didn't quite live up to their expectations, Rod returned to Buffalo and his father. For a time, aged 16, he was the boy vocalist in the Bill Creighton Orchestra, and went on to gain his first experience of broadcasting as the Saturday morning co-host of a children's radio show on WABY, Albany. By the time he was 19, Kennedy had enrolled himself in radio school at Boston's Emerson College. While there he met George Wein, "*a Boston University pre-med student who played swinging piano with style. He always had big plans to promote jazz.*" [ED. NOTE. Wein (with some help from Albert Grossman and Pete Seeger), as we all know, was *at the helm* of the original series of Newport Folk & Jazz Festivals]. Upon leaving Emerson College, in 1951, Kennedy was drafted into the marines and fought in the Korean War. Returning home in the late Spring of 1953, early the following year, he enrolled in a radio/television course at UT in Austin and graduated three years later. Working initially for KHFI-FM, Kennedy purchased the station in 1957. It became the first commercially viable radio station in the Lone Star state, as well as the first to broadcast in stereo. As compere of the Sunday morning programme, "Folk Music of the World," in 1962, Kennedy was approached by Ruth Hester, Carolyn Hester's mother, with the suggestion that he present her daughter in concert. The shows took place on May 8th and 9th 1962, at Austin's ACT Playhouse. In 1964 he promoted the first series of Summer Concerts in Zilker Park, and during the following year brought Channel 42 to Austin television screens. "The Chequered Flag," a "*listening*" music club, joined his list of ventures a few years later. Selling the club at the start of

the seventies, Kennedy continued to promote concerts and stage shows in Austin. In the process of gaining fame in radio, television and concert promotion, we also meet Rod Kennedy, the racing car driver. I doubt if Maury Coats, director of the Texas Commission for the Arts and Humanities, knew what he was initiating in terms of state and national folklore, when in early 1972, he invited Rod Kennedy to promote a folk festival in the Texas Hill Country town of Kerrville. The rest, as they say, is history and that *major trip* fills over two thirds of this book. Available from **Rod Kennedy, P.O. Box 33644, Kerrville, Texas 78029, U.S.A.** The book is available in three formats. All versions of the book will be autographed by Rod Kennedy. First is a limited edition hardback in a linen slipcase, complete with a folded copy of Mary Doer's 25th Anniversary festival poster and the 25th Anniversary Silverwolf CD, all for \$75.00. The hardback book alone is available at \$39.95. The softback version of the book is available at \$29.95. Postage on the US mainland is \$5.00 for 1st Class and \$2.50 for 3rd Class. For postage to other destinations, double the \$5.00 option. If sending a personal cheque, in \$, drawn on a US based bank, make it payable to **Rod Kennedy**. Payment can also be made by VISA, Mastercard and Discover.

"**One Man's Music**" by Vince Bell. This biography opens four days before Christmas 1982. Bell, 32 years old at the time, had just completed a late night recording session that he hoped would lead to the release of his debut solo recording. A matter of minutes after leaving the studio, he was involved in a horrendous accident. "*I was thrown 50 feet from the car I drove and left face-down in a pool of gasoline on a feeder road to Interstate 35 on the south bank of the Colorado River in Austin.*" The list of injuries that he sustained would have killed any normal man, instantly. They included "*Significant head injury, broken ribs, a damaged liver and a mangled right arm.*" For the month that followed the accident, Vince lay in a coma – the body's natural defence mechanism. Bell, however, is a born fighter. A tenacious survivor. The real life, six-million dollar man. The ensuing six years were spent in rehabilitation. That regimen included rebuilding his memory and reconstructing his right arm and [guitar playing] hand. The material included in this 200 page book, is drawn from Bell's own recollections [before and after the accident] as well as those of his many friends and acquaintances. For instance, Bell now picks his guitar with what he amusingly refers to as "*the claw.*" Far from being a work drenched in self-pity, Bell's battle with his body, mind and the firmament on which we live, will uplift your spirit. During the years that he was recovering and rebuilding his life, Bell's songs were kept alive by artists such as Nanci Griffith. Vince's "The Sun, Moon, and Stars" was featured on her 1991 album "**Late Night Grande Hotel,**" and "Woman of the Phoenix" was included on her 1993 folk music exploration, "**Other Voices, Other Rooms.**" The book closes, literally as it began, with the appearance of Bell's debut album. Titled "**Phoenix,**" it was released by the Austin based Watermelon label. Twelve years of [re]discovery and the overcoming of seemingly insurmountable problems, having elapsed in the interim. A signed copy of this limited edition book is available from **One Man's Music, 8809 Highway 100, Nashville, Tennessee 37221, U.S.A.** at a cost of \$20.00. For those resident in the UK and further afield, please add a handful of more dollars in order to assist with postage costs.

"The Gulf Coast Boys" by Richard Dobson. Bounded by a preface and epilogue, the events covered by this remembrance occurred during the period 1971/81. For the three years from 1971 onward, Dobson was a Nashville resident. Following this, his first, taste of Tennessee, Richard returned to his beloved Gulf Coast and for the remainder of the decade worked on shrimp boats and drilling rigs. In the mid-eighties, he returned to Nashville. Richard's first recording, **"In Texas Last December"** appeared in 1975. **"The Big Taste"** followed in 1978. The cast of players that pass through the pages of this autobiography include Rex Bell, Mickey White, Townes Van Zandt, Guy & Susanna Clark, Rodney Crowell, Skinny Dennis Sanchez, Steve Earle and many more. The Hemmer Ridge Mountain Boys refers to the trio that consisted of Townes, Mickey & Rex. They undertook a tour of Rocky Mountain venues through the winter of '74/'75, with Dobson in tow. Other adventures featured in this tome include the crossing of the Atlantic, to the Cape Verde Islands, on a drilling rig, and as a result, reaping the benefit of visiting the UK and playing his first [pub] gig. Available from **Greater Texas Publishing Company, 3400 Stevens Drive, Bryan, Texas 77808, U.S.A.** at a cost of \$21.95 plus postage on the US mainland at \$3.95 [domestic USPS priority]. For postage to Europe, add \$7.95.

"Follow the Music" by Jac Holzman and Gavan Daws. Subtitled *The Life and High Times in the Great Years of American Pop Culture*. This four hundred page hardback book covers Holzman's life story by way of narrative paragraphs, long and short, that feature his own recollections and those of the numerous music business professionals and musicians that he has been associated with. Born on Long Island in September 1931, the major part of this biography covers the period 1950 to 1973 – the Elektra years. The former, being the year in which Jac established the Elektra imprint. Holzman subsequently sold the label to Warner Communications in 1970, and the book closes with his departure from the label in 1973. If not for Jac Holzman, the world could possibly have missed out on hearing the music of Judy Collins, David Ackles, Steve Noonan, Love, Doors and countless more. In my opinion this man is a giant in terms of the music that he brought to the public arena. For students who can't quite recall living through the sixties, this book is an essential primer.

"Singing Lessons" by Judy Collins. This hardback book comes with a four-track CD that includes the new song "Singing Lessons." The two selections that follow are previously released, while the set closes with "The Wedding Song (for Louis)," a 1996 recording. Collins' autobiography **"Trust You Heart"** appeared in 1987 and was followed in 1995 by the novel **"Shameless."** This book further explores her life story with the suicide, in 1992, of her only child, Clark, being the pivotal event. Clark was thirty-three years of age and lived in Minneapolis. Considering the gravity of the latter event, this tome, at times, explores the darker side of life. That apart, as the chapters evolve, Collins reassesses many of the events in her life. Among those events, are her memories of her singing teacher, the late, Max Margulis. There are recollections of her work for UNICEF. Over many decades, there are meetings with numerous American presidents. And much more. One of the first albums I purchased, circa 1965, was Judy's **"In My Life."** While others musicians have come, enjoyed their *fifteen minutes* in my life and then left the room, I have

never once tired of Collins' voice [or buying her recordings]. Catharsis can be achieved in ones life by many avenues. **"Singing Lessons"** happens to be Judy Collins chosen route.

"Solo Women Singer-Songwriters – In Their Own Words" Marc Woodworth & Emma Dodge Hanson. The songwriters involved, all North American, get around twenty pages in which to expound their personal philosophy. Many of the contributors will be of interest to Kronikle writers. The book kicks off with the lady who invented Lilith Fair, Sarah McLachlan. The other writers range from performers who tour internationally, to those that still frequent their local [folk] club circuit. The cast [in order of appearance] is - Shawn Colvin, Jonatha Brooke, Cassandra Wilson, Ani diFranco, Mary Lou Lord, Mary Chapin Carpenter, Suzanne Vega, Holly Palmer, Joan Osborne, Lucy Kaplansky, Jewel, Rosanne Cash, Dionne Farris, Sheryl Crow, Lucinda Williams, Catie Curtis, Kate Campbell and Rosanne Raneri.

"Nanci Griffith's Other Voices – A Personal History of Folk Music" by Nanci Griffith & Joe Jackson. This book is a companion to Nanci's nineteen track, 1998 album **"Other Voices, Too (A Trip Back to Bountiful)"** and opens with a foreword by John Lomax III. By way of a thirty-page preface, Nanci provides an insight into her life - at home growing up, and on the road as a performing solo musician. She goes on to describe how her Blue Moon Orchestra came into being and evolved. Jackson [Hot Press/Irish Times journalist] takes up the reins, in the next chapter, by shedding light on other facets of her life, and goes on to introduce Jim Rooney, the producer of Nanci's two **"Other Voices, ..."** collections. Nanci takes up the narrative once more, as she recalls how the idea for the song compilations became a reality. Track by track, she describes how the songs featured on **"Other Voices, Other Rooms,"** the first collection, were chosen. Having reached page 120, the following nineteen chapters of this 270 page book feature comments [long and short] from the many voices who, track by track, took part in the recording of the songs that appear on last year's **"Other Voices, Too (A Trip Back to Bountiful)."** The pages of this documentary are liberally laced with black and white photographs of Nanci and the legion of musicians that she has worked with over the years.

Steve Earle 'In Quotes' by Joanna Serraris. This review is a result of a communication I received from *that infinite and invisible mailbox in the sky* enquiring about the Will T. Massey article I wrote for **Country Music People** back at the outset of this decade. Following a series of exchanges by E-Mail, it became apparent that my correspondent was a resident of The Hague, Netherlands. Not only that, she was a kindred spirit. A fellow scribe, that is. Having been a Steve Earle fan since the 1986 album **"Guitar Town"** she experienced her first taste of Steve Earle in concert, in an Amsterdam venue, a mere two years ago. Serraris was so smitten by what the man had to say between songs that she immediately set about writing this book. *When that chill of pleasure runs down your spine, you just cannot bear to let go of the cerebral source of that stimulating sensation. From that point on, it's gonna be a case of, gotta have another hit....gotta have another hit...* The result of Serraris' efforts is a 71 page, small, wine coloured hardback titled **Steve Earle 'In Quotes'**. It's one of those books that you can pick up at your leisure, dip into and a short while later

come away satisfied, without having to uncover the whole plot. Neatly split in to thirteen chapters [now there's a lucky, lucky number], the tome closes out with a one page, thumbnail Steve Earle biography, a discography and numerous acknowledgements. Those chapters are graced with titles such as *"On being a folk singer"* – a tale of once upon a time, *"On not being a folk singer"* – he no longer is, *"Earle on women"* – in his time, so far, he has known a few, *"Earle on drugs"* – a past hobby, and a truly fitting, closing chapter *"Tribute to Townes Van Zandt."* Give Earle his due, he never stinted in his support of Van Zandt over the years. A case of gratitude genuinely expressed. The self-confessed, *thorn in the flesh* of the country music capital, Nashville, is assessed in chapter nine, *"Others on Earle."* Weighing in with their thoughts are Guy Clark [Earle once played bass in Guy's road band], Emmylou Harris, Robert Earl Keen, Gretchen Peters and Mary Cutrufello. Which neatly brings us full circle as, in the same chapter, Will T. Massey recalls his 1991 European tour with Steve. As far as Massey the musician is concerned, just believe that the South will rise again. I thought that my only, minor, criticism related to the period of time covered by the quotes. As I noted earlier, Earle has been recording for major labels since the mid-eighties and although there are a number of undated quotes the majority source from the nineties. A recovered addict, Earle has walked a straighter path for much of this decade. He has, however, always spoken his mind. On reflection, he has accomplished that with a greater clarity of late, hence the intentional prevalence of recent material. A case of what's done is done - this is now. From that standpoint, the quotes in this neat little book quickly give you a sense of Steve Earle, the man, where he stands currently and how he relates to the greater global picture. The book is already available at **Helter Skelter Books, 4 Denmark Street, London WC2H 8LL and Badlands, 11 St. George's Place, Cheltenham GL50 3LA.** Alternatively, contact the author directly by E-mail on Joanna.S@musemix.demon.nl.

"Texas Music" by Rick Koster. Margaret Moser's short, but to the point, review of this work in the March 20th 1998 edition of the Austin Chronicle appeared to indicate it was a *must have* for my bookshelf. Well, here comes the gigantic jugular job. Conceptually **"Texas Music"** is a massive undertaking that seeks to shed light on every genre known to man, relative to the lives of musicians born or resident within the borders of the Lone Star State. The genres are identified in eight main Parts as "Country", "Rock", "Blues", "Folksingers and Songwriters", "The Flavors of Ethnicity" – *basically, Koster was toe dancin' with the term Tex-Mex*, "Soul, R & B, Funk, Disco and Rap", "Easy Listening, New Age and Classical" and "Jazz." Much of this book will, obviously, be of little interest to hard core Kronikle readers. Of those entries that will be of interest - Tish Hinojosa, for instance, turns up in the two-chapter "Folksingers and Songwriters" section. Hinojosa merits an entire page, housed in a highlighted box titled *Criminally Overlooked Artist*. Every Part of the book features this *Criminally Overlooked* invention, and Koster makes some sensible choices. Vince Bell, for instance. Two things are, however, faulty with the extended focus on Hinojosa. Ten albums [including the 1997 Watermelon **"Best of"**] into her solo career, Koster's judgement and impartiality relative to this artist lacks clear focus. Truth to tell, Tish has failed to come up with material strong enough to project her from the level of playing clubs and small concert halls to filling major

arenas. It's worth recalling that this scribe, circa 1991, was the first, on this side of the great pond, to pen [in a national publication] a feature about the diminutive San Antonio born chanteuse. The latter comment, is made from a thoroughly considered perspective. Point two – to be frank, Koster's research sucks. Totally. It's amazing how, through time, an error is compounded from fiction into fact. Koster would have us believe that **"Cada Nino/Every Child"** and **"Frontejas"** were Watermelon releases. Rounder Records issued both titles. Every writer, every citizen, is entitled to have an opinion and be allowed to express it in whatever fashion they feel appropriate. As for facts, they should be delivered with deadly and researched accuracy. *"If you don't know it and can't corroborate it, don't state it"* should be every thinking scribes maxim. Koster commits a number of similar *faux pas* in the *folk* chapter. Katy Moffatt's 1988 album **"Walkin' On The Moon"** was cut in Buchs and financed by the Swiss Red Moon label. It was not, as stated, an original Rounder Records recording. The text also includes the typo that the latter album was a 1980 release. The writers of the title track, Tom Russell and Katy Moffatt, met for the first time while performing at the 1986 Kerrville Folk Festival. I know, because I was there that year. I rest my case. During his lifetime, the late, Phil Ochs recorded for Broadside magazine and, subsequently, the Elektra [1964-66] and A&M [1967-76] labels. The 1965 recording, **"I Ain't Marching Anymore,"** was certainly not an A&M release. The "Folksingers and Songwriters" segment opens with the sentence, *"The easiest thing in the world to be bad at is folksinging."* Apart from the grammatical construction of the latter quote, I would pose the question – *'Did anyone factually check and proof read this book ?'* The seventy-four page "Country" section is subdivided into seven chapters, with titles such as "Singing Cowboys And Range Songs", through "The Dawn Of Western Swing" to "Progressive Country And The Austin Spirit" and closes out with "Post-Redneck Rock and The Rise Of Young Country" and "Renegade Traditionalists and Country Punk." Rather than bore you with yet another tirade on the art of factual accuracy, I'll leave you to assess the merit of this work with a quote from pp. 70. *'Wayne "the Train" Hancock, little brother of Texas songwriting legend Butch Hancock, is rapidly carving out a reputation to match that of his hallowed sibling.'* What amazes me, is that Rick didn't go that *mile farther* and mention that Tommy X Hancock, acknowledged leader and originator of the Supernatural Family Band, is their father. Not. The relationship goes as far as a common surname, and that's the whole story ! As for the most *crass, inane* and *unnecessary* statement in this book, it appears in the "Rock" Section and relates to the audition by Dallas born, Stephen Stills for a place in The Monkees. Word for word, including the typo, the sentence closes with, *'(he was reportedly turned down for bad teeth; obviously, this incident predated cosmetic surgery and such innovations as the medically enhanced, gravity-defying breasts on Baywatch.'* Can anyone explain to me the relevance of the latter statement in terms of **"Texas Music"** ? Despite my penchant for all things hailing from the Lone Star State, this time served newspaperman, for the Dallas Morning News, has given birth to a *stone cold turkey*. There's too much fiction mingling with real fact in this tome. As a result, it's an immensely irritating work. My advice - don't touch it. **[ED. NOTE. Dirty Linen reviewed this book in Issue 80 [Feb./March 1999]. Their consensus was similar to mine. I quote "it'll drive you nuts to wade through the text to find the**

several nuggets of useful information buried within.”] For several, read one or two. Don’t be misled. Save you money.

Unless stated otherwise, the above books are available from **A & R Booksearch, High Close, Lanreath, Cornwall PL13 2PF**. E-Mail : sales@arbooks.com.

And finally, there’s been an addition to the catalogue of Kerrville Festival “**Live Highlights**” recordings. The twelve tracks that constitute the 25th Anniversary album are listed below. The 25 days of the 1996 event were something of a marathon, and days 19 through 25 felt like the Kerrlight Zone – a place where no music crazed human had ventured before. We survived. The CD is available at \$15.00 and is postage free in the USA. For other destinations, I’d suggest adding \$5.00 for postage. The following credit cards can also be used, VISA, Mastercard and Discover. The mailing address is **Kerrville Music Festivals, P.O. Box 1466, Kerrville, Texas 78029, U.S.A.**

KERRVILLE 25th Anniversary Album

1. KEVIN WELCH - *Wilson's Track* (4:03)
2. CHUCK PYLE - *Other Side of the Hill* (3:01)
3. RICHARD SHINDELL - *Arrowhead* (4:08)
4. GAIL DAVIES - *Where Love Comes From* (4:32)
5. BUTCH HANCOCK - *Welcome To The Real World* (5:52)
6. JON IMS - *I Don't Love You And I Always Will* (3:00)
7. CARRIE NEWCOMER - *My Father's Only Son* (4:00)
8. TOM PAXTON - *Ramblin' Boy* (3:33)
9. CHENILLE SISTERS - *Girl Shoes* (2:55)
10. MICHAEL LILLE - *Perfect Strangers* (2:55)
11. TIM BAYS - *It's Magic* (4:45)
12. GARY P. NUNN - *What I Like About Texas* (5:20)



And finally, the sad news. On Tuesday 9th March, I received the following E-Mail from Martin Lewis :

DAVID ACKLES - SOME VERY SAD NEWS

I’ve been proud to have been a friend of David Ackles since 1971. It is with great regret that I write to tell you that David has just passed on - succumbing to cancer after a long, brave struggle. He passed away in Los Angeles last Tuesday - March 2nd. He was a very young 62.

I thought I would write to all those who have written in cyberspace about David in the past and ask that you might assist in posting this sad news on the appropriate news groups. In addition to this providing an opportunity for you and others to pay their respects to the memory of someone special – perhaps it might also stimulate those unfamiliar with his name to check out his music. I think the three Elektra albums are still available on CD in the UK. Elektra in the USA has shown no interest in releasing them. The fourth album - made for Columbia - has never been issued on CD.

A couple of months ago I collected all the appreciation’s I could find on the web and in news groups about David and gave him a print-out on the last occasion I saw him - Christmas Day 1998. He was very touched by the

appreciation of his work and the concerns expressed about his health by those who were aware of his illness.

I know that his surviving family - including his wife Janice, son George, sisters Sally and Kim and his mother Queenie, would be very moved to read any thoughts that admirers of David’s work might have.

May I ask that you please e-mail a copy to me of anything you post or read from others (perhaps also giving me the link) so that I can forward all tributes to the family.

ackles@martinlewis.com

A memorial service for family and friends will be held in California on Saturday March 20th. I would love to have some tributes from admirers to share with the family on that day.

So far I have discovered one website dedicated to David Ackles. It is run by Brian Mathieson

<http://www.mathie.demon.co.uk/da/index.html>

I do hope that as time goes by, other fans will feel moved to emulate this site and create their own cyber-tributes so that there are several lasting memorials to this great - and vastly under-rated artist. As someone who was lucky enough to have been one of his many friends - I can say that he was truly a gift to the world as a person as much as an artist. On behalf of his family and his other friends - I thank you very much. Martin Lewis martin@martinlewis.com

You can make a donation in David’s memory to any of the following :

University of Southern California School of Theatre, University Park, Los Angeles, CA 90089
Attention: **Dean Robert Scales (tel: 213 740 1285)**

The Lehman Engel Musical Theater Workshop, 335 North Brand Boulevard, Glendale, CA 91203
Attention: **John Sparks (tel: 818 502 3309)**

All Saints Episcopal Church, 132 North Euclid Avenue, Pasadena, CA 91101
Attention: **Ackles Memorial Fund (tel: 626 796 1172)**

DISCOGRAPHY

- “**David Ackles**” (Elektra - 1968)
- “**Subway To The Country**” (Elektra - 1970)
- “**American Gothic**” (Elektra - 1972)
- “**Five & Dime**” (Columbia - 1974)

My first memory of David Ackles is hearing “Down River” on John Peel’s legendary Radio London show “**The Perfumed Garden**” – or had Peel joined BBC Radio 1 by then ? It’s hard to recall, and it was the sixties ! All of David’s recordings possessed something unique, with stylistic influence c/o Brecht and Weill. This century and millennium will soon be gone, but one David Ackles song will shine on as a beacon in the canon of American 20th century contemporary music. I refer to “**Montana Song**.” Like Aaron Copland’s “**Appalachian Spring**” and Gershwin’s “**Rhapsody in Blue**” it captured, perfectly, a facet of the vast and rich tapestry that is America. David Ackles, thank you for your precious spirit and for sharing your music with us.

Arthur Wood, Kerrville Kronikle
Thursday 18th March 1999